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SUBJECT: SLM LEADER COMMENTS ON UNIFICATION EFFORTS

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¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The prospects for leaders within the Sudanese Liberation Movement (SLM) to unify appear to be dim and getting dimmer. During a recent meeting with SLM leader Adam Shogar, he expressed dismay with recent unification efforts, and was focused on the differences between the various factions, rather than what they had in common. Adam stated that he did not accept the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) as the basis for future talks, but said that both SLM political leader Dr. Sharif Harir and SLM commander Ahmed Abdulshafi might be ready to do so. END SUMMARY

¶2. (U) On the evening of 31 May, the Ambassador and Pol/Mil officer met with SLM leader Adam Shogar on an isolated rock outcropping on the outskirts of Abeche. Over the course of the hour long meeting, Shogar provided his commentary on the state of unification efforts within the SLM and possible options for the future.

Failure of the National Redemption Front

¶3. (SBU) Shogar stated that the National Redemption Front (NRF) had failed and highlighted his belief that the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) wanted to use the NRF umbrella to augment their own organization. Within the NRF, there were to be three key positions, the President, Secretary General, and the Field Commander. JEM wanted JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim to serve as President, with another JEM officer in the Field Commander position, and SLM taking the Secretary General position. He acknowledged that JEM was also willing to share the leadership positions on a rotating basis, but said JEM insisted that Khalil serve as the first president. Shogar had supported electing individuals to the key positions based on proportional representation. He had even proposed disbanding JEM and SLM entirely and creating a new organization. JEM had rejected this proposal.

¶4. (SBU) Shogar noted that there would never be an agreement within the SLM to allow Khalil to serve in a leadership position within a unified opposition. He stated that Khalil was not acceptable due to his relationship with Turabi. When pressed on this issue, Shogar explained that elements within the SLM had requested Khalil declare to the media that he had no such relationship with Turabi, or the National Congress Party, and to condemn Turabi publicly, but that Khalil refused. While not accepting Khalil as President within a unified opposition, Shogar noted that there would be no problem with Khalil serving in some other capacity. He described his relationship with JEM official Ahmed Togoud as good, and mentioned that they had just talked that day, when Togoud called him from Europe.

SLM Unification Efforts

15. (SBU) Shogar suggested that SLM political leader Dr. Sharif Harir's participation in the recent Sudanese opposition unification conference in Ameri was a big mistake, and worked against SLM unification efforts. Shogar stated that SLM commander Ahmed Abdulshafi and Sharif were both getting pressure from the Eritrean government to go into negotiations with the Government of Sudan. He said that Khamis Abdulla, his SLM ally, was in Asmara for the meeting underway there, but that Khamis did not intend to enter into talks on unification. Shogar was dismissive of some of his other SLM colleagues, calling into question their support base, noting that Abdulshafi had only three or four vehicles in his faction and Sharif, who was always wanting a leadership position, also had minimal support on the ground.

Center for Humanitarian Dialogue's (CHD) Efforts

16. (SBU) Shogar was well aware of the CHD's plans for a SLM unification conference in Nairobi. Shogar suggested that these efforts were premature, and that prior to any such conference there needed to be additional "hard work" in order to bring the leaders together. While Shogar appreciated the efforts of the CHD, he was not optimistic about this particular gathering. Although he did not plan to attend, he had selected ten individuals from his group to participate.

Views on the DPA

17. (SBU) Shogar stated that he does not accept using the DPA as a basis for talks, because he does not trust the

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Sudanese government's willingness to implement it. Pressed by the Ambassador not to aim at starting negotiations from scratch, Shogar said it would be acceptable to return to the fifth round of the Abuja talks and start from the Declaration of Principles. He noted that he believed both Sharif and Abdulshafi might support using an Abuja Plus formula as a basis for discussions.

18. (SBU) Shogar saw little promise in the Ambassador's point about setting aside for now attempts at reuniting the SLM and instead entering into talks based on the substantial areas of agreement that already exist among the rebel factions on negotiating objectives. Shogar argued instead that the SLM's unity was a necessary condition for successful talks. Without it, he stated, it would be easy for Khartoum to further divide the rebel groups with its "big bags" of money.

19. (SBU) As night closed in and the meeting drew to a close, Shogar noted that he would be traveling next week to "the liberated area" in Darfur. He said now he intended "to go his own way," working with other members of his group, including Khamis Abdulla and Adam Bakheit, and with representatives of the NMRD and various Arab groups now emerging in opposition to the Sudanese government.

110. (SBU) COMMENT: Shogar, one of the most guileless of prominent SLM figures, is turning into one of their most uncompromising. His comments highlight the continuing disarray in the SLM's ranks. For the main contenders, the struggle for leadership of a unified movement is taking precedence over the search for peace in Darfur. The Center for Humanitarian Dialogue will have its work cut out for it in seeking to bring Shogar's people on board at the conference in Nairobi. END COMMENT

¶10. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.
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